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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE,

MANIFOLD AND ONE.

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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE,

MANIFOLD AND ONE.

SIX SERMONS PREACHED IN PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL,

110825
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BY

BROOKE FOSS WESTCOTT, B.D.,
CANON.

B.e.29

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TO THE

VERY REVEREND A. P. SAUNDERS, D.D.,

DEAN,

AND TO THE

VENERABLE ARCHDEACON DAVYS,
REV. M. ARGLES,
REV. H. PRATT,

CANONS OF PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL,

These Sermons

ARE DEDICATED WITH SINCERE RESPECT AND GRATITUDE.

PREFACE.

THESE Sermons, the first-fruits of new work, are printed, partly that I may through them ask for the active sympathy of those among whom I have been called to labour, in the discharge of duties which at the present time may, as it seems, be made by God's blessing of peculiar benefit to the English Church; and partly that I may be myself reminded hereafter in times of failure and despondency of the thoughts which were ministered to me in the first Cathedral services in which I was allowed to take part.

This is not the place to discuss measures of Cathedral Reform, but I cannot refrain from repeating what underlies all that I have here

said, that the great want of our Church is recognized variety of functions and not uniformity. To parochialize Cathedrals would be to destroy one distinct element in our organization, and to add nothing in its place. What is needed is rather to specialize their office, and to claim for them, in accordance with the statutes of the New Foundation, the prerogative of higher education, that is, theological study in its largest sense and the final professional training of Candidates for Holy Orders. Our Church, as such, has made no provision elsewhere for the fulfilment of these necessary parts of her work. But let it once be recognized that it is the privilege of Cathedral bodies to fulfil them, and our Cathedrals will become, what they ought to be, and may be, the springs of the intellectual religious life of England. 'The which if they 'do,' to quote the preamble of our Statutes, 'we 'verily trust that great increase of piety shall 'come to the kingdom, and those who erected

'these churches for the glory of the All-good 'and Almighty GOD, and the advancement of 'the Christian Faith, and furnished the same 'with various orders of Ministers, shall in no 'wise be disappointed of their expectation and 'desire.'

B. F. W.

HARROW,
Sept. 15, 1869.

THAT it may please Thee to *illuminate* all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of Thy Word; and that both by their preaching and living they may set it forth and shew it accordingly:

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.

...

EPIPHANY, 1869

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

LIFE CONSECRATED BY THE ASCENSION.

PAGE

ST LUKE XXIV. 51.—It came to pass, while he blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven . . 1

SERMON II.

MANY GIFTS: ONE SPIRIT.

1 COR. XII. 4.—There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit 15

SERMON III.

THE GOSPEL OF THE RESURRECTION.

1 COR. XV. 11.—Whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed 27

SERMON IV.

SUFFICIENCY OF GOD.

2 COR. III. 5.—Our sufficiency is of God 41

SERMON V.

ACTION THE TEST OF FAITH.

PAGE

ST LUKE X. 37.—Go, and do thou likewise 51

SERMON VI.

PROGRESS FROM THE CONFESSION OF GOD.

ST LUKE XVII. 15.—One of them when he saw that he was healed turned back, and with a loud voice glorified GOD 63

SERMON I.

LIFE CONSECRATED BY THE ASCENSION.

SERMON I.

LIFE CONSECRATED BY THE ASCENSION.

ST LUKE XXIV. 51.

It came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up to heaven.

SUCH was the last scene of the earthly presence of the Lord. So it was that *having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.* Not silently and alone as Enoch, who *walked with* GOD, *and was not, for* GOD *took him:* not with the whirlwind and chariot of fire like Elijah, who was swept away before the eyes of his awestricken follower; but calmly, naturally, as we must think, with words of assurance and in the act of benediction Christ *ascended unto His Father and our Father.* And this revelation of human life linked to heaven by the Saviour's blessing is that on which we necessarily dwell to-day. Christmas, Easter, and Ascension-tide have each their peculiar lesson of joy, and we must

distinguish the lessons if we would apprehend their fulness. Christmas is the festival of the family, for then Christ by being born hallowed all the ties of home. Easter is the festival of the Church, for then Christ by the victory over death established a spiritual power among men, invincible for ever. Ascension-tide is the festival of the race, for then Christ by raising all that belongs to the perfection of humanity to heaven, gave us a glorious sign of our true destiny as men.

This being so, two thoughts out of many which offer themselves may be taken for our consideration now. The Ascension teaches us the consecration of all the parts of life; and it teaches us also the consecration of all the offices of life. Not only is every detail of each individual life impressed with a divine value; but the differences by which any life as a whole is separated from another belong also to the completeness of the divine order. We may reject the gift of GOD: we may mar the beauty which He is ready to perfect: we may mistake the purpose which he is ready to accomplish; but if we look to the Ascension and that last blessing with which Christ's earthly work was consummated, we shall know that all we do and all we are has in possibility,—GOD grant that it may have in deed—a vital relationship with heaven.

In many respects it is a happy circumstance that Ascension-day comes in the middle of our week. It

may thus indeed be neglected, but when we observe it, we are led at least to ponder on its meaning. Nor can that meaning be hidden from us; for it is plainly expressed in the services and in the recreations by which the Festival is marked among us[1]. Here to-day the full joy of work and the full joy of devotion, the hearty gladness of seasonable mirth and the solemn fellowship of divine Communion, meet together in a true harmony. Earth to-day may be seen by us united with heaven, not as in a dream to the sleeping patriarch, but in the open triumph of a Saviour. To-day, to the eye of faith angels once again are shewn *ascending and descending* in ministry to the sons of men.

1. In this then lies the first lesson of which I spoke, the religious unity of life. If we enter into the spirit of Ascension-day, we shall be enabled to realize practically that Christian life is essentially one. Over all the hands of Christ are raised to bless. In Christ the results of thirty years of silent and obscure labour, no less than of three years of recognized ministry, were transfigured and raised aloft for ever. By that last pledge of love, by that last victory of love, a real unity was restored to human existence. Nothing can be clearer than the significance of the fact, but we still need greatly to be reminded of

[1] Ascension Day is observed at Peterborough by an annual meeting of the members of the Cathedral body, the Grammar School, and the Training College.

the truth thus made known to us. We are always tempted to break up life into little fractions; to separate routine and effort; to contrast secular and spiritual; to assign this part to the duties of the world and that to the service of GOD. But to-day we may learn that such a division is faithless and vain. As the body is one, so also is the life. Physical health is the harmonious action of every member according to its proper law, and religion is the true health of our whole being.

Such a view of life as this is undoubtedly solemn, but it is also inexpressibly grand. No one would desire deliberately to lower the recognized dignity of action, and we may rejoice when any habitual mode of thought helps us to appreciate it more worthily. Do what we will we know that we must be beset by sorrow and suffering and care. We may for a time close our eyes to their presence, but in the end they will make themselves felt with more crushing power. If however we once see that these also belong to the completeness of our discipline; that through them GOD makes Himself known; that by them that person is fashioned which, by His grace, shall be lifted to heaven;—if we once see that it is in the silent, unnumbered, unnoticed trivialities (as they seem) of daily business that character is formed which in due time a crisis will reveal: then already something of a divine harmony is re-established among the elements which sin has disordered.

So it comes to pass that we can by GOD'S blessing draw strength from failure. When we place the seen in its true relation to the unseen, the circumstances of life appear in their true proportion and significance. Whatever is, inchoate, imperfect, discordant, becomes a sign of that fuller being into which all our efforts and all our achievements are destined to pass. That only which is wholly of the earth can find its satisfaction on earth; all which belongs essentially to some vaster whole must as yet bear about with it the marks of incompleteness, and to our eyes the appearance of failure. The weaknesses, the littlenesses, the incoherences of daily life, so long as they are felt and struggled with, are evidences of a victory yet to come. They bear witness to us that we cannot rest till we rise to the level of Him in whom we live. They never cease to teach us that the end to which we are called is not now nor here. Moved by their importunate promptings, we must confess that it is not enough to die with Christ: that it is not enough to rise with Christ: we must also ascend with Him even now, 'in heart and mind,'—with the power of feeling and with the power of thought—to the presence of GOD, that so at last we may reflect His glory and be transformed into His likeness.

2. The whole life of a Christian is then, when we view it in the light of Ascension-day, one in its character, in its progress, in its issue. It is also distinct in its function. As the circumstances and facul-

ties of men are permanently different, so the religious office of each, which represents the sum of all his endowments consecrated to an eternal destiny, is necessarily different in form. There is one body but it is composed of many members. There is one life but it is expressed in many ways. Certain as this truth is, we are practically in constant danger of forgetting it. The same spirit which leads us to isolate parts of our life as alone religious, leads us also to construct one type of religious work, so that all action which does not fall within this narrow boundary is left out of account. Thus it necessarily follows that our theories prove unreal; that our conception of religion is impoverished; that our effective energies are lessened by lack of sympathy and by secret misgivings.

But to-day we are raised to a higher platform. Those to whom Christ gave his last blessing, those whom He sent as the Father sent Him, fulfilled their commission not after one pattern but after many. Even in that first outburst of renovated life each believer worked according to his natural gifts. One ministered, another preached, another wrote: one satisfied an immediate want, another laid up treasures for a later time. Every form of service was hallowed, because all were rendered to GOD. And this is the image of Christian activity which we are at present called to imitate according to the measure of our power. In this way only can we gain a true sense of the worth of the individual life, when it is seen to

contribute its distinct share to the manifold richness of the total sum. In this way only can we realize in any degree what is that Body of Christ which, while it finds in Him its perfect unity, is extended and sustained by that which every part supplies, to complete its beauty or to harmonize its action. If we were all alike in our highest attributes, if religion were in all the same exercise of the same gifts, then the defection of one or another would make little difference to the general result; but if, as we see it must be, the faithlessness of one subtracts from the whole that which no other can supply, all is changed; we feel at once the overwhelming majesty of life even in its ultimate details: we feel that we can never be alone and confine to ourselves the issues of our actions: we feel that in us, in each of us and in our common duties, the highest well-being of humanity is imperilled.

Such thoughts as these, which flow naturally from the celebration of Ascension-day, seem to have a special fitness for ourselves. Elsewhere it might be difficult to enter into the conception of the religious unity of life. Elsewhere it might be difficult to see how different groups in society act and react upon one another and contribute to the fulness of beneficent service. But our Cathedral life is so ordered as to bring these ideas practically home to us. Here our daily services so fall into our common work as necessarily to give, so far as they are real, a religious

character to all we do. Here our parts in a corporate society are so clearly marked out that we can never forget how much we depend one upon another for the adequate fulfilment of the general office with which we are charged. Here are concentrated, as we see to-day, the representative spiritual powers which are organized to meet the wants of every section of the Church. Here in a word we cannot but recognize that our whole life, if it be true to its idea, must be religious. Here we cannot but recognize that each one of us has some task to fulfil which no one else can fulfil, and which is destined in its fulness not for himself but for others.

If the opportunity be given me I hope to speak hereafter more at length of the ennobling and cheering thoughts which spring from the consideration of the complex constitution of our Cathedral body. At present I can barely indicate what seems to be its central conception as brought out by the services of to-day. It is strength in coöperation, strength in the consecration to one end of manifold gifts, strength in religious fellowship. How greatly we need such strength is evident from all around us. No one can have reflected on the position of our national church without feeling that its chief peril lies in the isolation of its constituent parts; and this defect is the more dangerous because it springs from our national character. Thus we find a tendency to separation personally, in our religious feelings, and paro-

chially, in our religious organization[1]. There is among us a want of sympathy and a want of combination. We do not trust others with our highest aspirations: we do not look to others to carry on and complete what we have begun or partially apprehended. Now it is not too much to say that (as I believe myself most profoundly) a Cathedral like our own furnishes exactly those elements of varied and yet converging energy which may by GOD'S blessing form a spring of harmonious activity throughout the Church; powerful by the influence of a disciplined dependence, elevating by the presence of a divine aim. Our gathering here to-day interprets my words and confirms them. By our school we are brought into the closest contact with those who will be the head and heart of our city population; by our College with the great masses which it is the first privilege of the Church to quicken and raise; by our clergy, with the pioneers of thought and speculation, which it is their office to make tributary to the glory of the Truth. To labour in these manifold functions, to inspire them by the power of sacrifice, to harmonize them by the spirit of a divine life, to strive towards the union of tasks and classes, is the mission to which we are called. The work is for our country and we come to GOD through Christ for strength to fulfil it: the work is

[1] The relation of the Cathedral body to the Parish is admirably marked out by Mr Beresford Hope in his *English Cathedral of the XIXth Century*.

for our generation, and we bind it to the past by our meeting in this grand temple which is itself the monument of twelve centuries of Christian triumphs.

Such a view of our common work is, I admit, a lofty one, but it is not chimerical. The stirring times in which we are privileged to live call for heroic efforts, but I know that the efforts will not be unavailing. They call for faith and truth, but it is on these foundations that all great results must rest. They call for unselfish and unreserved co-operation of class with class, and rank with rank, but it is through mutual dependence that our personal powers are most operative. They call for self-denial and discipline, but so it is alone that we can learn what is the peace of perfect freedom. They call for trustful love for man, for loving trust in GOD, but it is by love that the heart of man is opened, and by trust that the help of GOD is won. The very dangers which seem imminent rouse us to a sublimer faith. Human weakness is the vantage-ground of divine strength; and to-day we consecrate our aspirations by looking to the ascending Saviour.

May GOD grant that that vision may not soon fade from our sight. May it rather be for us too the pledge of transfigured life. Let us only carry its teaching to our several works; let us see in it the divine pledge that life in its eternal aspect is one and manifold; and it must be so. If only each scholar will cherish as he learns the thought of his fellowship

with the religious work centred here, and afterwards carry the thought with him through the business of his life: if only each teacher who goes from among us will keep alive in the isolation of his laborious duties the sense of sympathy with those who share his trials and supplement his toils: if only each priest in silent study and public ministration will remember the countless workers whose manifold services it is his high commission to bring to the throne of GOD: if only each one of us will now join in one intense prayer for sympathy and communion; it will be given us to know as we have never yet known the majesty and power of our life in Christ. *Without me*, the Lord has said, *ye can do nothing*. Through Him, *all things are possible to him that believeth*. May we all—may I in the prospect of new work—rest in the fulness of that boundless promise. May we all—may I in the fulfilment of new work—find ever, as on this Ascension-day, the Risen Christ to give His blessing.

Peterborough,
ASCENSION-DAY, 1869.

SERMON II.

MANY GIFTS: ONE SPIRIT.

SERMON II.

MANY GIFTS: ONE SPIRIT.

1 COR. XII. 4.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

IF we try to picture to ourselves the earliest forms of life we shall see at once that they are distinguished from that with which we are familiar now by a strange simplicity. There is little intercourse between men, and little sympathy. Their wants are few and for the most part such as they can satisfy by their own direct effort. For them the idea of humanity is limited by the extent of their tribe: the idea of the universe by the iron circle of the sky. Step by step fresh mysteries of being, fresh possibilities of action, are opened before them. The stranger is no longer synonymous with 'the enemy' or 'the barbarian.' The margin of the world fades before the inquirer who would reach its boundary. Experience reveals within the heart deep wants which

social trust and social love alone can satisfy. Class is linked to class and race to race by inseparable bonds. The various functions of teaching and production and distribution are almost indefinitely subdivided. A single detail is found to be sufficient for the labour of a life-time. All the offices and duties of men become inextricably complicated, till at length, as the least consideration will shew, in all we do, and in all we enjoy, we depend at present, consciously or unconsciously, on the ministration and sympathy of countless fellow-workers and fellow-feelers whom yet we can never know here face to face. There is something very sublime and at the same time very awful in the thought of this marvellous complexity of our modern life, even in its outward aspects; and if we penetrate below the surface and come to feel that the same law holds in the spiritual as in the material relations of men, we shall readily acknowledge that we are in the presence of a truth which it concerns us most nearly to apprehend as far as we can do so. If religion be the most complete harmony of life with the seen and the unseen, the modes in which it will be embodied will vary with the varying modes of life. It also will necessarily exhibit, like the visible life of which it is the soul, a development, a progressive subdivision of parts, a mutual dependence of action, issuing in a mightier and fuller energy. At the same time it will be exposed to the peril of conventionality, to the peril of isolation, to the

peril of indifference. All the causes which tend to stereotype or separate or narrow our lives, tend equally to stereotype and separate and narrow our religion. And, if, on the other hand, we see that by the counsel of the Divine Love the highest forms of earthly good spring from the co-operation of the most diverse elements, so we believe is it also in religion. Here too the distinctness of our special work, however small, is a condition of the perfection of a whole which we cannot yet imagine. Here too the fulfilment of our peculiar office is the pledge of the efficacy of the divine life of which we have been made partakers. Here too the full majesty of our redeemed nature is seen in the glory of that august spiritual Body of Christ in which we are all incorporated.

It is in the light of such reflections as these that we can understand the words of St Paul which we have heard this morning, *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.* There is an essential difference in all lives, and there is in them also, by the gift of GOD, an essential unity. There is a difference in them because there is a unity; because, that is, they are not bounded by that which falls under our present notice, which is fragmentary, imperfect, half-suppressed, but pass on to the more immediate presence of GOD, where all that has been blessed by His Spirit coexists in absolute harmony and power.

These then are the two thoughts which I wish now to commend to you. There are among us diver-

sities of gifts; and these gifts belong to the same Spirit. St Paul is speaking, it is true, of special gifts while he is writing to an exceptional society, but we may rightly generalize his words when we refer them to a Christian state. And thus interpreted they have a direct application to ourselves.

1. In our ordinary life, as I have already indicated, we fully recognize the law of progressive variety. It is indeed forced upon us by all the conditions under which we act and think. It is called into play equally by the natural endowments with which we are born, and by the circumstances under which we use our powers. It is the spring of all that is most impressive in national character: it is the spring of all that is most energetic in personal influence. A great people stamps the history of the world with the impress of its special traits. A great man sways his fellows by the gifts through which he differs from them. There is nothing from which a true patriot would shrink more than from the endeavour to obliterate the marks which represent in his countrymen all the issues of the past. They may be transformed, ennobled, transfigured, but in them lies the pledge that the nation has still something to do for the race. Remove the difference, slender it may be, by which citizen is distinguished from citizen, and something is lost to the fulness of the body which nothing can replace. External equality is uniform degradation.

But while this principle is acknowledged unhesi-

tatingly in social and political life, we do not commonly apply it to religious life. Religion is regarded as something abstract, uniform, colourless. Here it is supposed that the rich variety of function which marks the development of man finds no place. He is *unclothed*, to use St Paul's image, and not *clothed upon*, that so he may fulfil his highest work. We suddenly abandon the law which has guided the magnificent growth of life when it approaches its last fulfilment. We trust to no generous spontaneity when we come as sons to our heavenly Father. We painfully mould and repress ourselves after one fashion; and enemies say, not without the semblance of excuse, that our religion looks traditional, formal, dead, powerless to claim all human interests for its domain, all human faculties for its instruments. And still if we reflect that what we are called upon to offer to God is nothing less than ourselves, our souls and bodies, it must at once be seen that in that *perfect, holy, living sacrifice* is included every element of character, of endowment, of circumstance, by which each one of us is made to differ from others. Thus it is that not only as men, or as citizens, or as members of families, but as believers in Christ, we have severally a definite and personal work to do, for which we have received in our powers and in our positions the requisite equipment. Only let us be faithful to the ministry which we have received, without attempting to estimate its value or measure its

efficacy: only let us be sure that religion is the consecration of our whole nature and not the special attribute of any one part of it: only let us come to GOD such as we are, bowed down it may be with the burden of toil and care, without the opportunity, as it seems, of preparing an offering for His acceptance: and He will welcome and purify and hallow all that we lay before Him. But so far as we fall short of this: so far as we set apart any section of our interests and our energies as foreign to our religion: so far as we aim at satisfying an artificial standard of emotion or belief which answers to nothing within us: so far also we lessen the total sum of Christian powers and impoverish the fulness of that life to which we are called to contribute. Other offices may appear to us to be more fruitful than our own: we may wish for an ampler field on which to shew the devotion which we sincerely feel: our time, we may argue, is so engrossed by necessary routine that all nobler aspirations are dulled. But if followed to their spring such thoughts come simply from faithlessness and impatience. They may rise to tempt us till the sure answer comes that we are in the hands of GOD, who has given us our place. For us it is enough to keep it. We see but a part while He sees all Differences which to our eyes are enormous vanish in His presence. The results of silent service, of complete self-surrender, of patient trust, cannot be measured by our present experience. They survive

us on earth and they follow us before the very throne of heaven.

We are called then in Christ to bring to GOD our whole selves. This and nothing less than this is our rational service. And if so our religion will be as manifold and as personal as our lives, active now through this gift, now through that, and hallowing with the cross all that is truly human.

2. But underneath this infinite variety, this intense individuality of religion, so to speak, there lies the one common Spirit which combines all the separate parts into a harmonious whole. We work each in our own way with untiring and truthful effort, and because we do so, and just so far as we do so, a higher unity is possible. There can be no unity in an aggregate of similar atoms. Thus we are brought to our second point. Our diversity of gifts is reconciled in one supreme destination.

All the images under which the religious life is figured bear witness to this its twofold character. The power and beauty of the Christian society are always shewn to us in manifold subordination. At one time we are taught to regard it as a temple reared through long ages, each stone of which fills its special place and contributes its share to the grace and stability of the fabric. At another time as a vine, where by the complicated and delicate machinery of Providence earth and air and water are fashioned into leaf and flower and fruit. At another time as a body, where

a royal will directs and disciplines and uses the functions of every member. At another time as a vast army, where each soldier trained and strengthened acts no longer for himself, but even to absolute self-sacrifice submits to the sovereign control of his leader. It is impossible to mistake the meaning of such images, which teach us our mutual dependence in every aspect. We are dependent on the past which determines our relative positions. We are dependent on the present which supplies the materials for our action and the law by which we can appropriate and employ them. We are dependent even on the future which may require that we perish, as some forlorn-hope, to ensure the triumph of those who shall come after us. This, I say, is clear if we practically realize what Holy Scripture teaches us; and not less clear is it in Whom mutual dependence is brought to unity. Christ is the Corner Stone on which the whole temple rests. Christ is the Root from which the vine draws its vital energy. Christ is the Head from which the body receives its divine impulse. Christ is the great Captain by whom through toil and suffering and loss the army is led to victory at the last. We are all different and therefore we *may* be one. We are all united in Christ and therefore, unless we are unfaithful, we *must* be one.

It would be easy to pursue these reflections into detail, to point out in special cases the variety of gifts with which GOD has blessed us, to shew how they are

joined together so as to produce in due course nobler issues otherwise unattainable. But I prefer to leave them in their broad and simple form. Each one can tell for himself what he has and what he is: each one can tell whether he strives to render all to the glory of GOD. In the meantime enough, I think, has been said if we take the thoughts to our hearts, to guard us against the dangers of unreality, of isolation, of indifference in religion which seem peculiarly urgent now. If it be true, and who can doubt that it is true, that religion is the divine soul of the whole of each separate life; that something has been given to every man, more or less in human judgment, whereby a special duty is marked out for his fulfilment; that all we do passes at once out of our reach to influence others for all time; we shall strive ever more and more earnestly by GOD'S help to realize in some degree the ideal which we see before us. While we labour to consecrate our whole life we shall not hastily adopt any conventional mode of marking our purpose, but wait for the Spirit to embody itself in its true form. While we cultivate to the utmost the special gifts which we have received, we shall not be content till we have referred them to their social end, from which alone they derive their proper dignity. While we refuse to compare office with office, and service with service, knowing how little we see and that little how imperfectly, we shall never forget that it is to Christ each act of the Christian life is ren-

dered, in His sight, by His power, in obedience to His will. Doubtless we shall fall short often and sadly of the standard which we have set up, but our failure will be not without hope. We shall know, know with an ever-increasing assurance, that all life must be eternal and may be divine, and look humbly and trustfully to that Spirit from whom comes our rich diversity of gifts that He may strengthen us to use them rightly to His glory.

Peterborough,
TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, 1869.

SERMON III.

THE GOSPEL OF THE RESURRECTION.

SERMON III.

THE GOSPEL OF THE RESURRECTION.

1 COR. XV. 11.

Whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

LAST Sunday I endeavoured to point out some of the broad religious lessons which are forced upon us by the conditions of modern life. I endeavoured to shew that the law of progressive variety which confessedly applies to all our material interests, applies also to our spiritual activity: that our religion finds its true expression in the consecration of our special gifts: that there is no human faculty which may not by GOD's help be made an instrument of divine service: that there is no one believer in Christ whose ministry will not contribute to the effectual energy of that august body of which we have all been made members. I endeavoured to shew that all our natural endowments, all our personal histories, all our con-

trasted circumstances are so many opportunities for peculiar work; and thus to encourage every one to offer to GOD that which he *has* and *is*, in the sure trust that every gift and every power will be ennobled in the offering, and made to subserve to the heavenly cause to which our lives are pledged.

The epistle of to-day, from which my text is taken, sets forth how, being the frail, sinful creatures that we feel ourselves to be, we can yet cherish these glorious aspirations, and rest assured, even in the midst of failure, that they are not vain. In that Gospel, as the Apostle calls it, of Christ's Death and Christ's Resurrection we stand; by that we are saved. It accompanies us from the beginning of our lives to the end. It is the voice which welcomes the unconscious infant to his Saviour's love: it is the voice which commits the unconscious dead to his Maker's keeping. It is the full satisfaction of one of the deepest instincts of our nature. As men we must look heavenward; but as believers in *Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again*, even now *our conversation is in heaven*.

This then is the thought which I have chosen for our meditation this morning, the belief in Christ's Resurrection as influencing the Christian's life. The subject is at all times a practical one, for if GOD in His great love enables us to realize in any way more personally what is the power of that belief, He will teach us also to convert the fresh knowledge into

deed; and however rich our experience may be, however near we may have felt Christ, however tenderly we may have been drawn to Him, we can never exhaust the fresh spring of that apostolic gospel. It is therefore well, as occasion offers, to go back to the first principles of our faith. The message of the Resurrection which the Apostles were charged to proclaim has lost none of its significance, but we, I think, perplexed by the necessary growth of later thoughts, are often in danger of missing the grandeur of its simple outline. At least the unnatural barriers of separation which we all fix in various degrees between parts of our duties and our pleasures: the conventional banishment of our highest desires from ordinary intercourse: the unreal triviality which first veils and then smothers passionate longings for sympathy: the sense of weakness which drives us in upon ourselves: the sense of weariness which forces us again to frivolity; shew that we have not yet fully learnt the lessons which it can teach, or the strength which it can give; for the faith in the Resurrection can harmonize life: can inspire life: can transform life.

1. The faith in the Resurrection of Christ can harmonize life. Whenever we pause to think what our lives are, they must seem for the most part to be a strange patchwork. Very much appears to be done for us, over which we have little or no control: very much is determined by the necessary routine of our daily occupations: very much is fashioned by the

current opinions of those among whom we are thrown. And these great sections are brought together more or less by aspirations, by resolves, by acts, through which we witness however imperfectly to the stirrings of GOD's Spirit within us. But if we rest here, we have not known the power of Christ's Resurrection. Though comparatively little may be left to us to determine by our arbitrary choice,—and I think that we do not commonly reflect how little it is: though body and mind, wearied with urgent occupations, fail to fulfil the desires which we sincerely entertain: though we indulge in honest fancies of what we would do if other circumstances were granted us; still in the light of the Resurrection those very hindrances, those burdens, those little gifts are seen to fashion and equip the several members of Christ. It is in each case the distinct person who has received that imperious bias from the past, who is hemmed in by those peculiar cares and toils, who is entrusted with that one poor talent, it may be, to save whom Christ died. The whole life is one (we must reiterate the truth) just as the whole man is one. At any moment we represent in ourselves the entire sum of the past which we have gone through—of influences from without, and of impulses from within, of the deeds which we have done and of the thoughts in which we have indulged—and just so far as these admitted at first the presence of Christ, so far also will they be made to bear the image of His glory:

so far even now do they form parts of a true harmony.

If we consider for a few moments in all reverence the earthly life of the Lord we shall perhaps grasp more firmly the idea which I wish to convey. That life, we all know, was absolutely perfect, absolutely harmonious, absolutely one, and still in its outward conditions it was not essentially different from our own. Christ was born poor. He was subject to His parents. Step by step *He increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with* GOD *and man.* Till the appointed hour came for a brief ministry, He continued for thirty years in silence and labour. His time, like our own was, to outward sight, occupied with routine. He who had come to save the world was known to his neighbours as *the carpenter.* The record contains a virtue which we cannot misunderstand. Christ lived that humble life to shew us that all life is potentially divine. The various forms of life do not differ in their inherent capacity for spiritual progress, but in the opportunities for its manifestation; and if we look to Christ, He will bring to one the manifold fragments out of which our lives are built, even as He bore to heaven after He rose from the dead the fruits of that long time of obscure and common toil; no less than of His active ministry, united in His perfect manhood.

2. Thus it is that for us faith in the Resurrection of Christ harmonizes life. It can also inspire it. The

Christian lives, according to the impressive words of Holy Scripture, *in* Christ. It is from Christ that he draws his energy by vital union: it is as a member of Christ that he fulfils his part in the great economy of the world. By his faith in GOD Incarnate and man ascended he stands forth as a witness of the essential unity of the seen and the unseen, of earth and heaven; and there never was a time when it was more necessary to proclaim this truth than it is now. There is about us on every side, in the midst of much that is simply ostentatious and false and selfish, a restless striving for the truth, a stern impatience of hypocrisy, an eager desire to do something to raise the masses of men to their proper dignity. And in the meantime popular religion seems to stand aside from these great stirrings of national life. Adversaries even venture to urge that Christianity is, at least in certain aspects, hostile to truth, to sincerity, to freedom. The sphere of its action and its hopes is said to be transferred by tacit consent to a remote region, inaccessible even to the imagination. So true it is that at first we neglect our gifts, and then we deny them.

There is need then that a fresh spirit should be breathed through our common life to shew not only that the whole may be truly divine, but that every part in it contains some spiritual capacity and power. And if we go back to the simplest elements of our faith we shall see at once whence it must come, and what is the fallacy which lies at the root of all reason-

ing which tends to divorce religion from any human interest. Our first prayer teaches us to ask not that we may be transferred into the kingdom of GOD, but that the kingdom of GOD may come among us. And conformably with this the whole life of the Christian is rightly spent in the effort to see more of GOD in His Word and in His works, and to make Him seen more clearly by others. We are placed, as it were, in the presence of a veiled glory. The practised eye can habitually pierce beneath the covering, and even we of duller vision come to feel, first perhaps in seasons of darkness, the reality of its effulgence. In a word heaven is not for us so much a 'yonder' towards which we have to move, as a 'here' which we have to realize. It lies about us, even as we *live and move and have our being* in GOD, though often we know it not. While we work and wait and watch, now this bright glimpse now that is given; and it is due to our own faithlessness if every spot in which we are set does not become to us like the stony desert to the fugitive patriarch, a Beth-el, a very gate of heaven.

Doubtless it is hard *to endure as seeing the invisible*, but when the spiritual eye grows dim, the thought of Christ risen *in Whom* we are, will remove the mists which cloud them. If once we realize what these words 'we are in Christ' mean, we shall know that beneath the surface of life lie depths which we cannot fathom, full alike of mystery and hope. The very fact that Christ lived and lives with the fulness of His

perfect manhood is sufficient to enable us to appreciate the possibilities of our being. Everything that is human catches a brightness from that supreme light: everything that is transient is found to be charged with an abiding issue by contact with that eternal Truth.

3. The faith in the Resurrection of Christ can then inspire life. Once again it can transform it. We have seen that our nature, our personality, is a result of complicated forces and yet is indivisible. If we try to form a distinct conception of what we call vaguely our soul, we shall find that we include in the idea all the details of circumstance and action and feeling and thought, which go to make up that which we feel to be ourselves. If we attempt to leave out any part, however small, even in the remote past, the present result is changed. The acts and the words of our childhood, nay, the acts and the words of our parents, bear ever fresh fruit in us. And as far as we can look forward, wherever we can represent ourselves as living still, under every conceivable change of circumstance and organization and faculty, we are forced to regard this manifold result as still continuing. Where it ceases *we* too cease: where it fails *we* too are maimed and imperfect.

This inevitable conclusion is very solemn. At first sight, and without Christ, it is overwhelming. We know each how, as life goes on, its stream grows stained and turbid. Dark memories from distant years

come unbidden and mingle with its current. We cannot stay the source once opened. And for the infinite future, is there then no release, no restoration, no purifying power? Must we for ever carry with us not only the impress of the past, but that ever-springing fount of sorrow, if not of sin, which lies in the bitter recollection of good neglected or evil done? The answer comes to us from the cross and from the sepulchre. *Beloved, now are we the sons of* GOD, *and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.* The open vision of GOD in Christ will then transform us into His image. By that the most amazing miracle of Divine love and Divine power will be consummated, the complete forgiveness of sin crowned by the transfiguration of the sinner; and in the mean while to look for that, to prepare for that, as far as we may do, to treasure up such glimpses of that ineffable glory as may be shewn to us, to carry with us throughout our whole work the recollection of the Risen Saviour, is the profession to which we are pledged, the mission to which we are called, the strength with which we are clothed.

To repeat then what has been said, the belief in the Resurrection of Christ harmonizes life, inspires life, transforms life. The words are lofty words, and if for us they are words only they bear with them the sad condemnation of a noble ideal recognized and abandoned. But, my friends, I cannot think that we

shall rest contented with the possibility of such an issue. To make of life one harmonious whole, to realize the invisible, to anticipate the transfiguring majesty of the Divine Presence, is all that is worth living for. What life is, as we see its outward form in the vain shadow of earth, the lesson of the last two days may teach us. Suddenly, without time for special preparation or parting counsel, one[1] of our own body passed almost at once from the fulfilment of his daily ministry to helpless unconsciousness, from unconsciousness to his final rest; but by a most touching coincidence the last words which he accompanied in this Cathedral[2] express, as we trust, his last prayer and his last confession, and breathe comfort beyond any words of man: *Lo! this is our* GOD, *we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the* LORD, *we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.* I cannot, as a stranger, speak with fit judgment of his services, but I know that they were long, that they were faithful, that they were zealous; and I know that work so done by the grace of GOD, follows him who has been enabled to do it, to bear fruit beyond all that we can imagine, and that the memory of it survives to be a silent power for good among those who shall come after. Death, after earthly duty loyally, humbly, patiently

[1] Mr John Speechly, organist of Peterborough Cathedral from 1836, died suddenly August 7, 1869.

[2] The last words of the anthem at evening service on August 5.

fulfilled, is not the end but the beginning of life. That is the Gospel of the Resurrection to which our thoughts have been turned this morning; and may GOD in His great mercy grant to us all to know, as our hope is our brother knew, not in word but in power, the Gospel which we preach and ye believed, the Gospel of Christ's Passion and Christ's Triumph.

Peterborough,
ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, 1869.

SERMON IV.

SUFFICIENCY OF GOD.

SERMON IV.

SUFFICIENCY OF GOD.

2 COR. III. 5.

Our sufficiency is of GOD.

THESE words of St Paul which occur in the Epistle for the day carry forward the thoughts with which we have been occupied in part on the two last Sundays. We have seen the manifoldness of the materials which are given into the hands of the Christian to use in the service of GOD: we have seen the harmonizing, inspiring, transforming power of the Christian faith. But when we fall back from the earnest longing for a consecrated life to the littlenesses and distractions and failures of each passing day: when we contrast the power of our creed, as an ideal, with the actual effect which it produces upon our habitual manner of acting and judging:—it is impossible that we should not be filled with a profound distrust of ourselves. We are tempted to declare, in the bitterness of disappoint-

ment, that after all the vision of a life moulded into one whole, and animated by one Spirit, was but a dream; that we cannot realize the Life and Passion and Resurrection of the Lord as certain truths which must colour the whole stream of our existence. And indeed so it must be, so long as we look at ourselves. In that contemplation of self lies weakness without the prospect of support; failure without the promise of redemption. But if it be well that we should learn by sad experience what we cannot do by our own power, still, to rest in this knowledge of despair is to renounce our birthright. Discomfiture and defeat are means by which GOD draws us closer to Himself. Each fresh discovery of our helplessness, if we use the opportunity, reveals to us at the same time a present source of succour. We are alone, as it may seem, or few, or powerless, in the midst of the world, which moves on its way with irresistible force: we are beset and baffled by circumstances which lie wholly without our control: we dishonour and discredit by our faint-heartedness the name which it is our privilege to bear; yet even so, in isolation, in failure, in dejection, only let the thought of self perish, and we shall know that we are not desolate: *our sufficiency is of* GOD.

St Paul when he used these words originally was speaking of the ministers of Christ, and it is in this relation that we must first consider them; but we may also extend their application further to those secondary ministries of life and thought to which

every believer is devoted. The ordinances of the Christian society, the conduct of the Christian life, the confession of the Christian faith, all alike derive their sufficiency from GOD. Looked at in themselves, they may seem poor and unmeaning and foolish, but when referred to their Divine spring, and thereby seen in their proper majesty, they become *a power of GOD and a wisdom of GOD.*

1. This is true in the first place of the ordinances of public worship, the institutions of the Christian society. It is perhaps very natural that we should regard these according to the sensible effect which they are calculated to produce upon our feelings, and thus remotely upon our actions. We can see, for example, that a particular exercise of devotion is likely to move us deeply, and forthwith we set an immoderate value upon it: another may appear dull and uninteresting, and though it may be providentially commended to us, we unreasonably neglect it. Everyone's experience will furnish him with examples of what I describe. We disregard too frequently the public and social aspects of religion. We crave to follow out each step in the process by which we are individually to be made like to GOD, and judge beforehand the direction in which the steps must be made. Perhaps even we grow restless and dissatisfied, and murmur that privileges are withheld from us which others enjoy. Doubtless it is by such stirrings as these that provision is made for progress in the

Church, but the part of reformers is reserved for few, and for them it is encompassed with peril. To the mass of us meanwhile it may be a lesson of inestimable comfort that we are not left to an uncertain caprice in the choice of the means by which we shall publicly approach GOD. Let us then forget ourselves when we meet together, and think of Him only, and He will assuredly make Himself felt. The dullest sermon at least offers a fragment of His word. The loneliest service is at least rendered in His immediate presence. There is a danger, and I should be most unwilling to underrate it, of coming to regard outward acts of worship as inherently meritorious, but there is a danger to which we appear commonly to be more liable, of neglecting to look for any blessing from Divine ordinances apart from the emotion of which we are ourselves conscious. The whole system of public worship is, if I may so speak, sacramental. Not only does it rest on the two Sacraments as its essential basis, but each part is a symbol of a spiritual antitype and fitted to be the channel of a spiritual grace. We meet here not as kinsmen, not as friends, not as outwardly bound together by ties of dependence or duty, but simply as members of Christ whom He has called to work in His Body. It is then impossible not to acknowledge that in this relation we may look for peculiar blessings when once we feel that each service is a function of a spiritual life. If in humble and faithful expectation we lay ourselves

open to the Divine influence, as we do to the air and the sunshine, not attempting to define too curiously how it quickens us: if we who teach sink ourselves utterly in the message with which we are charged and the ministry which we have to fulfil: if you who hear look beyond the voice and the instrument to Him whose love is so brought near to you: if all come together in this place prepared to receive and not to create, to offer themselves and to find life and access of life: then we shall understand by fellowship with the Author of all strength what it is to confess and to know that *our sufficiency is of* GOD.

2. The ordinances of public worship in this way force us to think on our common spiritual life. Unless they are regarded in this light they have no distinguishing mark. The special blessings which they bring, as we feel upon the least reflection, come from GOD and must be sought from GOD; and faith is soon content to wait upon His will. But in the active ministry of life it is more difficult to learn the same lesson. Here where we seem to trace the course and the issues of actions more plainly, we are apt to continue more hasty and impatient and discontented. It is very hard to realize the vitality of effort. It is very hard to labour as believing that he who plants can rarely see the rich fruitage of the tree. It is very hard to refrain from *measuring ourselves by ourselves* and claiming our reward before men. We complain —whose conscience does not accuse him—that we

have toiled in vain. We say bitterly that we may fold our hands and rest, for no deliverance is wrought by us. We forget the harvest reaped from others' labours while we murmur that the seed which we have cast upon the ground remains long hidden. And all this is because we do not firmly grasp the truth that in all we do *our sufficiency is of* GOD. What we have is *from* Him: what we do is *for* Him. As soon as we really feel this we shall not be strong only, but strong in quietness. We shall be afraid to anticipate the results of devoted service, but rather commit them to His keeping in whose hand are *we and our works.*

To many the saying *whatsoever is not of faith is sin* has seemed exaggerated, the command *pray without ceasing* impossible; and yet both, I believe, must be applied literally to life. Every part of life cannot but have a connexion with that unseen world by which we are surrounded. To realize this connexion, is faith; to seek fellowship with its King through Christ is prayer. And just so far as we limit our purposes and desires by the visible and the temporal, we miss our true aim, we sin. Just so far as we claim no heavenly guidance and support, the clearest sight of the beauty of the eternal order is simply a vision of condemnation. And if this be so, or rather since this is so: while that heavenly light can stream over the occupations of our daily business: while that heavenly communion can be made vital by lifting the soul upward in the momentary acknowledgment of GOD'S

Presence; shall we not be satisfied to do calmly and for eternity that which we find prepared for us, knowing that all so done must work its proper work, unflattered by success and undisturbed by failure, because *our sufficiency is of* GOD?

3. Such a view of life, infinitely noble as it is, naturally comes, as we have already seen, from a belief in the first elements of the Christian Creed. But who has not trembled often at the contrast between the words of our profession and the type of life with which we are satisfied? It seems as if it were impossible to embrace in simple sincerity the true import of the awful facts to which our Christian name bears witness. The more our conceptions of the universe are widened the harder it seems to be to realize that the Maker of all took our nature upon Him and died for us and bore our transfigured nature to heaven. Faith becomes more difficult in proportion as our need of it becomes greater. Yet even here the text speaks comfort. It raises us above ourselves: it points to the beginnings of faith in the love of GOD: it recognizes the cöoperation of our will, but traces all our strength to a Divine source. *No man*, it is written elsewhere, *can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.* To be ready then to declare that we do believe that Christ died and rose again for us: to welcome the new bond which the gospel establishes among all men: to wait even with dim eye and dull ear for the coming of the kingdom of heaven:

is for us a sign that the Spirit is active within us. We may still feel difficulties which no intellectual effort can wholly remove: we may still find natural impulses urging us to selfish indulgence: we may still be cumbered with much serving when Christ is waiting to speak to us; but it is enough if we have learnt our weakness: it is enough if we can lift the cry which was once powerful against the might of evil: *Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief:* it is enough if we look beyond ourselves for the confirmation of our faith, and know that *our sufficiency is of* GOD.

To sum up all then very briefly, the losing of self in the supreme thought of GOD is the secret of our power as Christians. In this spirit it is that we are taught to frequent the services which Christ has ordained, waiting devoutly for the blessing which He is ready to give.

In this spirit it is that we are taught to offer to Him our lives, in the sure trust that He will consecrate them to the eventual ministry of His Church.

In this spirit it is that we are taught to come before Him with our faltering confession, knowing that in due time He will confirm it by the witness of personal experience.

So may we be enabled in devotion, in action, in belief, to know ever more certainly that *our sufficiency is of* GOD.

Peterborough,
TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, 1869.

SERMON V.

ACTION THE TEST OF FAITH.

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SERMON V.

ACTION THE TEST OF FAITH.

ST LUKE X. 37.

Go, and do thou likewise.

THERE is no one among us who is not familiar with the story of the good Samaritan which we have heard again this morning as the Gospel of the day. There is no one in whose heart its deep lesson of love does not find a clear response. But in this as in all other narratives of Holy Scripture there is a freshness which no acquaintance deadens: a fulness of meaning which no single experience exhausts. As we change ourselves, the details appear in new combinations: as we view them in altered lights, they become radiant with unexpected brightness.

Thus the circumstances with which the parable is connected by St Luke bring it into a significant relation with the topics which have been presented to us on the last three Sundays. If at that time the

Lord could thank His Father that the mysteries of redemption were *revealed to babes,* the thanksgiving applies to us who have learnt that spiritual service lies in the consecration of simplest duties. If at that time He could pronounce His disciples blessed, because their eyes saw and their ears heard what was not made known to prophets and kings, the blessing belongs still more to us for whom each day makes clearer the manifold glories of the Gospel of the Resurrection. If at that time the student of the Law, who had rightly penetrated to its meaning and sought by deeds to inherit life, required to be placed face to face with an ideal *This do and thou shalt live,* felt to be alike true and unattainable, the lesson is no less for us who hardly learn by disappointment and disaster that *our sufficiency is of God.*

Moreover the parable itself has a close application to ourselves. If as yet we have advanced no further we may hope that we have all at least reached the position which the lawyer had gained. Like him we have an adequate theoretic knowledge of the faith in which we have been born. Like him we are, I assume, honestly desirous to turn our theory into practice, even if we are tempted to attach an inordinate value to our works. Like him, I do not doubt, we are often ready to justify ourselves when we are confronted by claims which we are unwilling to satisfy. For us then, no less than for him, the story of the Good Samaritan has its peculiar lessons.

It tells us that we are to carry our intellectual knowledge of religion into the actual conduct of life: it tells us that humanity is the only limit which GOD has placed to the ministries of love: it tells us that opportunity is the test of character: it tells us, not indeed with stern irony to earn life by a perfect obedience, but to manifest the life which Christ has given us in the faithful endeavour to fulfil the noblest instincts of our nature. May GOD grant that we may listen to the lessons, and as He gives us strength, obey them.

1. A pure Creed is indeed an inestimable blessing. No greater privilege is given to men than to be able to advance in the knowledge of Divine things, to learn by slow and patient thought how truth is set against truth, and all the various lines of revelation in the words and works of GOD converge to one great unity. He who has carefully reflected on what he professes to believe, and pierced to the spirit of his faith, like the lawyer in the parable, has gained a vantage-ground for action. But knowledge is only a vantage-ground and not a victory. If we neglect to turn to use the superiority which it gives us, our defeat will only be the more disgraceful because we were so richly furnished for the battle. Religious truth cannot be of the intellect only. It must, if it be held vitally, shew itself in life.

What then is the practical power of our peculiar faith? How is our conduct directly influenced by

what we hold as Christians, or as members of the English Church? How do the special articles of our belief move us to exertion when we are tempted to indolence? how do they discipline us to self-restraint when we are tempted to pleasure? how do they ennoble with a Divine dignity the trivial details of our daily business? how do they gather into one supreme sacrifice the manifold services in which we are engaged? They can do this, and if they do not according to the measure of our infirmity, I fear that we cannot be said, in any true sense, to believe at all.

If we take the simplest examples my meaning will be most evident. Can any one, for instance, sincerely believe that GOD the Father made the world, and not regard all creation, even in what we call its lowest forms, with a devout reverence? Here too there are marvels of love and wisdom, partly veiled and partly open, before which we must check all wantonness and wilful caprice. Can any one sincerely believe that GOD the Son redeemed all mankind, and not feel his soul stirred within him towards those who as yet have known no tidings of the Gospel? Here too there are around us in the ignorant and the outcast those for whom Christ died, to whom we are privileged to commend our faith by the tender offices of charity. Can any one sincerely believe that GOD the Holy Ghost sanctifieth all the elect people of GOD, and be content to drag on a life of poor frivolity without claiming for it the glory of transfigurement?

Here too there are occasions and faculties and impulses which the Spirit is waiting to convert into springs of blessing.

Such questions, which rise out of the first elements of our Creed, must help us to feel what a gap lies between our confession in words and our confession in acts. And if we pass on to the characteristics of our own branch of the Church, how few among us look upon these as fresh motives, fresh instruments for labour, which are given not to minister to our pride but to fit us for our appointed task! Yet is it nothing that a temple like this in which we are gathered reminds us of the splendours of our inheritance? Is it nothing that we claim to represent the national Christianity of England by direct succession from the earliest times? Is it nothing that our Catholic Church has never been permanently compressed within any partial mould of truth, but has been able at all times to *bring forth from its treasures things new and old*, to satisfy the wants of all who come to it for support and guidance? Nay rather in all these things there are unexhausted sources of strength. But we, in our faithlessness, divorce theory from life, and forget that each advantage becomes for us a more effective motive for energy, and that the superior purity and completeness of our faith must, if it be real, manifest itself in increased power of action.

2. At this point, however, I can imagine that we, like the lawyer, may inquire in genuine perplexity,

where we are to find scope for this practical energy of faith. To him the answer was given in an inverted form. He asked who was his neighbour. He was told to consider who acted as a neighbour. And in this inversion lies a deep truth. It is one of the necessities of our imperfect lives that we fence ourselves round with prejudices and tastes and party sympathies. We are unconsciously narrowed in our real apprehension of the fellowship of men. We require to be pointed to deeds of heroism and devotion in those from whom we are most widely separated in order that we may actually feel the bond of the common nature which underlies every difference of class and creed. When we doubt to whom we must shew love in the strength of our Christian faith our eyes are directed, it may be, to one who denies it, who yet by his works shews that he is moved by the love of purity and the love of truth, which *we* draw from an unfailing source.

The thought is one on which it is well to dwell in times like our own, when sharp intellectual differences are found on all sides combined with common zeal for the removal of definite evils. Our faith, let us remember, is not opposed to the truest instincts of humanity, but rather makes their fulfilment possible. If, as I believe, what is called Natural Theology has no substantial basis, man is naturally religious, and the Gospel furnishes him with motives sufficiently powerful to overcome the temptations of selfishness,

and hopes sufficiently strong to support him through the long delays which separate the seed-time and the harvest. The Christian differs from the patriot and the philanthropist not so much in the immediate ends which he seeks as in the impulses by which he is moved to seek them. If his aims are always wider and more far-reaching, they are forced upon him by convictions infinitely more persuasive. A spiritual Samaritan, a stranger that is, or even an enemy to our faith, may first open to us our duties, but then we shall confess with shame that we were already pledged to the fulfilment of those offices of charity by the neglect of which we have brought discredit on our name.

3. And this reflection brings me to the last point in the parable which I wish to notice. No example can shew more clearly that opportunity is the test of character. We may be sure that countless little acts of cowardice and self-seeking had hardened the priest and the Levite against the final claim made upon their devotion. We may be sure that countless tender services of unquestioning love had prepared the Samaritan to imperil himself in the hope of saving an alien. *They* had not contemplated desertion so disgraceful: *he* had not set before himself devotion so complete. But when the crisis came it revealed the accumulated results of a long, slow growth in selfishness and sacrifice: it revealed the intrinsic hollowness of a life hitherto holy in the sight of men: it revealed

the fatal difference between a true faith dissociated from faithful action, and instinctive piety loyally obeyed.

And as it was of old time, so it is now. It must in the end be disastrous to cherish a creed which finds no expression of its characteristics in our lives. The Christian will pause from time to time to satisfy himself that he does, by GOD'S grace, work in the spirit and by the help of his faith. It is always easy to find excuses for good undone and evil done; but each excuse accepted removes our faith farther away from the sphere of life and weakens the motives by which it prompts us to action. Those who left the wounded man to perish could doubtless have awakened compassion in others by describing the extremity of their own peril. The dying traveller would have become simply an incident in their story. Such a version of the occurrence would, we must confess, have seemed plausible. It is only by the contrast that we feel the baseness with which ministers of GOD betrayed their trust. It is only by the appeal to instinct that we can fitly condemn their degeneracy from their creed. And when we apply the test to ourselves, when we compare what our faith enables us to accomplish and what our humanity claims from us, with what we actually effect, we shall be ready to take the condemnation to ourselves. Some men who have been and are most active in reforming our criminals, in elevating our poor, in purifying the methods of government,

in ennobling the aims of national policy, are without the all-constraining belief in the Gospel which we hold. We ought to be stronger and more active than they. If we are not our Christianity must be passing into a form. Thus we shall find in every record of self-sacrifice an imperious call to us as Christians to test the reality of our belief. In every golden deed by which GOD reveals the possible nobility of man we shall hear His clear command: *Go and do thou likewise. Go and do thou likewise:* faith in Christ furnishes thee with a motive of irresistible force: faith in Christ furnishes thee with an instrument of inexhaustible strength.

Peterborough,
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, 1869.

SERMON VI.

PROGRESS FROM THE CONFESSION OF GOD.

SERMON VI.

PROGRESS FROM THE CONFESSION OF GOD.

ST LUKE XVII. 15.

One of them when he saw that he was healed turned back, and with a loud voice glorified GOD.

WE were led last Sunday Morning to consider the right interpretation which the heart of man gives to the Divine truth of our common brotherhood; to see in the action of a Samaritan a luminous commentary on the Law of which he was held to be the enemy; and so to ask ourselves very humbly what practical use we make of the special treasures of faith and discipline which are committed to our keeping, not for theory but for life. In the person of an alien the Lord then set before us the type of our duty to man. To-day he sets before us again in the person of an alien the type of our duty to GOD. The coincidence is not to be overlooked. It is as if He would teach us among other things this great lesson,

that instinct ratifies the Gospel, and forces us to recognize in the deeds of strangers to our covenant the principles which ought to be the necessary spring of all we do or think. It is as if he would teach us that the human soul, when it is true to itself, strives upwards, and that our Christian faith makes the fulfilment of its aspirations not only possible but natural. And though the miracle of the ten lepers is less familiar to us and less pathetic than that parable of the Good Samaritan, the details of the history add singular force to its central teaching.

A common misery, we read, had brought together men who otherwise had no dealings with one another. As *lepers* the Jew and the Samaritan were equal. In distant isolation they confessed their common uncleanness afar off. They lifted up one voice of prayer. They received one testing command. All alike proved faithful under this trial, and all alike were cleansed. Then appeared the difference which lay deep in their inmost souls, deeper even than the springs of faith. *One*—one only of the ten—*when he saw that he was healed turned back, and with a loud voice glorified* GOD *and fell down at* [Jesus'] *feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.* In that generous devotion, which formalists would call disobedience, we seem to see the spontaneous nobility of his true manhood. He could not fulfil the letter of the injunction which had been imposed upon him till he had satisfied its spirit. He could not claim

from the priest the witness of purity till he had openly acknowledged the magnitude of the blessing which he had received. He could not make the prescribed offering in the Temple of GOD, till he had rendered grateful worship to Him in whom he had found the Presence of GOD. An imperious voice within him called him to an immediate service. To that all other claims must yield. The delay indeed was but for a moment. From the lips of Christ he heard at once that his heart had interpreted rightly the will of his Saviour; and then he was charged in new strength to complete the interrupted duty: *Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath saved thee.*

What then, we may ask, did he gain more than his fellows? They too were made whole even as he. He too was commanded to leave Christ even as they. The answer is near at hand. They found the blessing, but he found the spring of blessing. They experienced the action of life, but he reached to the soul of life. They remained what they were, devout Jews, it may have been; but he welcomed in his soul the revelation of the power of faith. He had seen GOD: he had given glory to GOD: he had moved others to look for GOD by the confession of his own experience: for him *all things were become new.*

And for us, my brethren, the essential circumstances of the narrative are realized every day. GOD is ever cleansing, strengthening, blessing us through Christ, like those ten lepers. And for our part we

are not slow to render to Him the prescribed service of decent devotion; but how few there are among us who pause to recognize His personal love and presence in the act of mercy to themselves: to tell courageously what things He has done for their souls: to stir others by opening the sources of their own joy. And so it is that our Christian life seems to be so poor, so fragmentary, so undiffusive, that many question whether it has any longer more than a traditional existence, while it is unable to interpret, and combine, and fertilize, the materials of thought and action with which we are called upon to deal. If however we can pierce to the spirit of to-day's Gospel: if we can make our own that which the one Samaritan gained over and above his restoration by his public adoration of the Lord, then I believe that all will be changed. Life will become not a prayer only but a psalm of thanksgiving, uniting at every point the visible and the invisible in hope and in accomplishment. But to this end, like him, we must see GOD: we must give glory to GOD: we must confess GOD openly before men.

1. We must see GOD. It is true that in GOD *we live and move and have our being,* and still very commonly we do *not* see Him. There is a wonderful saying of one of the greatest of the Greek philosophers, which will help to explain my meaning. Strangers had come from a distance to render him their homage and profit by his wisdom. On their

arrival they found him engaged in the humblest of domestic labours. Ashamed to surprise him in what seemed to them a menial service, unworthy of a great master, they would have withdrawn unnoticed; but he recalled them by a word which laid open the divine mystery of life. 'Enter,' he said, 'for there 'are gods also here.' Yes, my friends, there are gods also here: that is the thought which explains and ennobles our trials. A little more keenness of sight, a little more quickness of ear, and we might become conscious of the divine powers by which we are encircled. For us doubtless the point of that saying of Heraclitus is concentrated in a way which he could not have imagined by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; but still even in its old shape it may be of use to us. It is an incalculable blessing to be *able* to pause at any moment and say 'GOD is also here': it is an incalculable blessing to pause and say it. All our habits of thinking and planning tend to remove the idea of GOD far away from us. We become familiar with so many modes of applying and transforming force and life, that we are in danger of forgetting that we do not create them. Yet it matters not how many links in the great chain of sequence we may be able to distinguish and follow: they do not help us to dispense with a beginning. And Faith knows that that beginning is GOD, even our Father.

The effort thus to see GOD about us is, I say, of the highest practical moment. There is no one here

perhaps who has not known the value of the thought *Thou* GOD *seest me*, but this 'seeing GOD' of which I speak is something more. *That* is a safeguard but *this* is strength: *that* keeps us from doing but *this* arms us to do: *that* suggests the presence of a Judge but *this* the presence of a Redeemer. And in the common details of life it is *this*, the conviction of the nearness of GOD to help us, which we want above all things. We pray languidly, expecting little: we take the gifts and the trials which come to us for the most part as a matter of course: we are like 'the nine' who made their petition and received their answer, without actually knowing that the petition was addressed to a present GOD, and that the answer came directly from Him. But when the better way is opened let us boldly enter upon it, and claim, like the Samaritan, to see the personal love of GOD in the action of His Providence.

2. If we see GOD we shall then, in the next place, be ready to give Him glory. It does indeed appear to be an amazing thing that man can give glory to GOD, so that it be acceptable to Him. The fact points to some deep harmony of creation which we are as yet wholly unable to comprehend. Here all human analogies fail us; and still we know that we can magnify the honour of GOD, not as though He needed anything, but as if He rejoiced in the free devotion of His creatures. For ourselves however we can see more clearly what privileges are included in

this power of giving glory to GOD. It assures us that we have fellowship with Him; and that our true work is His. There must be some likeness of nature, or the tribute would be impossible. There must be some community of purpose, or we should not rejoice instinctively in the thought of the Divine omnipotence. And as we exercise the powers which enable us thus to realize a Divine communion they become insensibly more pervading and more energetic. Whoever has cultivated the habit of looking to GOD and praising Him will have found growing up within himself the vital consciousness of a present Saviour by Whose strength and for Whom he is working. He will have learnt not to be impatient of results, for he knows that we see but little of that which can be seen even on earth, and that the end is not here. He will have ceased to trouble himself as to what GOD gives him to do, for he feels that the work of GOD is one, and that all faithful labour contributes to its fulfilment. He will have rested in the assurance that what he is allowed to do is of moment only as one test of what he is enabled to be, for he sees that the influences of life propagate themselves in countless incalculable ways. He will have penetrated to the secret of unfailing strength; for in reply to each fresh acknowledgment of Divine mercy he will find borne in upon his soul, as the revelation of the law of life, *thy faith hath saved thee.*

3. In the mean time he will have recognized

also that his sense of GOD'S goodness has imposed upon him duties towards his fellow-men. The Samaritan when *he saw that he was healed, turned back and with a loud voice glorified* GOD. It was not enough then that his gratitude should be real; it was to be open too. And this brings us to the last point which I wished to notice. In that open confession which Christ blessed lies a lesson which we need greatly. There is, I think, nothing sadder in the world than the waste of Christian influence. From one cause or another we shrink from the responsibility of avowing our deepest convictions. Partly it is from the fear of ostentation and singularity, partly from self-distrust and sincere humility, partly from more unworthy motives. But from whatever cause it may be, by so doing, we wrong our friends. We leave unspoken the word which might have cheered or guided or turned them. By our coldness we suffer them to remain in doubt whether GOD has visited us. If the heart be full, men argue, its feelings will find utterance. If the Christian creed be accepted as the Truth, it cannot but colour the whole life of the believer. Not to speak then of our highest hopes, not to talk, one with another, of what, as we trust, GOD has done and will do for us, is to cast discredit on our name. When that is at stake we may well forget ourselves. It was strange and presumptuous, no doubt, in the one Samaritan to turn back alone. The ignominy of his descent exposed his boldness to yet severer criticism. But none

the less his boldness was welcomed with a blessing. He was strengthened himself by his confession, and he strengthened others. And so will it be with us. No one, I fancy, has ever ventured to cast aside his religious reserve without meeting with sympathy for which he had not looked, and gaining courage from the sense of spiritual fellowship. How *can* it be otherwise? It is not of ourselves we speak but of GOD whom we have seen. It is not our own honour which we look for, but the glory of our Father which is in heaven. It is not of any special prerogative we make boast, but of a blessing which is offered as the common heritage of men; for Christ *is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world.* So may we all see Him as our Redeemer and our Strength: so may we give Him glory: so may we confess Him before men!

Peterborough,
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, 1869.

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